|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | * **5**
 |
|  | **Beatitudes and the Common Good:****Working for the Common Good** |
| What’s the Point? | The teens will discuss the challenges between meeting personal needs and contributing to the benefit of others. They will understand the values of the common good and stewardship. |
| **Background Information** | ***Reference**** ***CCC****: ¶1716-29; 1905-1912, 1924-1928, 2239*
* **NAB** : Micah 6:8 (*do justice, love kindness, walk humbly with your God*); Mt. 25: 14-30 (*parable of the talents*);
* ***Total Youth Ministry: Justice and Service*** - Read pp.73-75

Creation teaches us that God made everything with love and that love is what runs through everything. That is what is true. Because love is the foundation, everything we think is bounded by and guided by love – in fact as John tells us “God is love.” *(1 Jn* 4:8) The common good then is what God created in love. When we talk about the World we are not talking about Creation but the world we have created from our wounded and broken natures. Our human judgment is flawed and our solutions are limited by our flawed natures. God’s justice is the solution we need to understand in order to begin to work solutions to the problems our flawed natures have created in God’s perfect Creation.A prevailing principle that runs through human practice when it comes to thinking about solving problems is call “Utilitarianism” where what is considered the best answer is what is best for the most people. On the surface that does not sound so bad, especially in the case of limited resources. But if we examine it through the eyes of God’s justice, we see the flaws. For example who decides who fits into the most group and who falls into the minority who are denied?The principle that runs through God’s justice is “The Common Good”. The Common Good is the social condition that allows all the people in a community to reach their full human potential and fulfill their human dignity. It is about needs, not wants or desires. It is larger than mere *utilitarianism*, where what is best is what is best for the greatest number of people; this is the *greatest good* for *everyone*. This is the vocation to which we are called. We are to help everyone fulfill their vocation and make sure that everyone gets to Heaven. One aspect, according to Catholic social teaching, goes with our “*being in the world but not of the world*” where we are called to participate in society positively, in ways that will contribute to the common good, in other words, we are called to be good stewards. And it is up to each of us. As the saying goes, we are called to “*Live justly so that others can just live*.” Think about what means. Would we not hope the same of others for us and for our families? We must learn to do for others as we would want them to do for us.“*The common good, the good of society as a whole, can be likened to the balance that is not simply desirable but necessary for both wheel and tire on an automobile. Out of balance means trouble ahead. Perfect balance means safe progress whenever the wheels are in motion. Both driver and mechanic take the whole tire, the entire wheel, into consideration when they inspect the tires for safety and road readiness.*The New Dictionary of Catholic Social Thought*, edited by Judith A. Dryer (Michael Glazier Books, 1994) contains an interesting article on the common good (pp.192-97). It makes the point that recent teaching presents two complementary themes relative to this concept, namely, the obligation of the individual to contribute to the common good, and the right of the individual to participate in the benefits of society. Anyone who takes a moment to reflect on the fact that more than 44 million Americans participate in no health insurance program today will be forgiven for expressing outrage at this obvious assault on the principle of the common good.**For better or worse, all of us in the human community are in the same boat. All of us have to work to keep it afloat and pull our respective oars if progress is to be achieved. Turn … to Gaudium et Spes (No. 30) for further instruction on this important point: ‘The communitarian character of human existence means that the good of each person is bound up with the good of the community. Thus the obligations of justice and love will only be fulfilled when each person contributes to the common good in accord with his or her abilities and in light of the needs of others.’**Commitment to the common good is the ultimate self-improvement program!*” (*Jesuit Father William J. Byron)*Human is human is human. Everyone is a child of God. Everyone deserves the same salvation, the same opportunities and the same responsibilities. We do not differentiae in any way. If there is something we do which blocks good for others, then we are at fault, we sin. If we do something which promotes good for others then we are merely doing what we are supposed to do.Evil, according to Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), is a *privation*, the absence of some good which belongs to the substance of the creature, i.e. something like *freedom* or *life*, where the lack of it is bad. Evil, then has no substance in the sense that good does (i.e. God) but is the lack of something you should have – with the implication that nothing *created* is evil in itself. This goes back to the understanding of Creation as *good* (c.f. Genesis 1). Evil, simply put, is what ought not to exist. Evil can *happen* or is the consequence in the willful privation or denial of one to another; eating is not evil, but over-eating, and especially over-eating which denies another food, is. **The Beatitudes**What do the Beatitudes have to tell us about the common good? Recall that the meaning of ‘Beatitudes’ is ‘blessings’. We have to think about the Beatitudes as the compliment of the Commandments. The Commandments tell us about how to act – towards God and towards each other. We must keep in mind the idea that “*God is our God and we are his people*” (*Ps* 95:7 among other places) where we do the things God calls us to do because we simply can do nothing else – any other choice is sin! The Beatitudes tell us about the effects of that: peace, comfort, inheritance, and so on, whereas, as Paul tells us, “the wages of sin is death” (*Rm* 6:23a).“*The Law of the Gospel ‘fulfills,’ refines, surpasses, and leads the Old Law to its perfection. In the Beatitudes, the New Law fulfills the divine promises by elevating and orienting them toward the "kingdom of heaven." It is addressed to those open to accepting this new hope with faith - the poor, the humble, the afflicted, the pure of heart, those persecuted on account of Christ and so marks out the surprising ways of the Kingdom.*” (*CCC* 1967)“*The Beatitudes respond to the natural desire for happiness. This desire is of divine origin: God has placed it in the human heart in order to draw man to the One who alone can fulfill it: We all want to live happily; in the whole human race there is no one who does not assent to this proposition, even before it is fully articulated. How is it, then, that I seek you, Lord? Since in seeking you, my God, I seek a happy life, let me seek you so that my soul may live, for my body draws life from my soul and my soul draws life from you. God alone satisfies. The Beatitudes reveal the goal of human existence, the ultimate end of human acts: God calls us to his own beatitude. This vocation is addressed to each individual personally, but also to the Church as a whole, the new people made up of those who have accepted the promise and live from it in faith”* (*CCC* 1718-9)So, when we mourn, or seek peace, or are poor in spirit, or hunger and thirst for righteousness, or are merciful, or put ourselves forward for the love of God, that is, for others, then we change not just ourselves but the world around us. We act with justice when we follow the Beatitudes; when we shape our thinking and our attitudes by the Beatitudes, we help bring about the Kingdom of God on earth just a little bit more, a place where “*every tear is wiped away*” (*Rev* 21:4), where “*the deaf hear, the lame walk, and the dumb speak*” (*Lk* 7:22).And that is the greatest good. |
| Materials Needed | * PowerPoint
* Computer
* Overhead projector
* 1 copy of scenarios (below) for each leader
* 1 copy of “The 7 Basic Themes” for each teen
* Materials for Stone Soup illustration
 |
| **Attention Grabber** | ***Stone Soup*** **(3 min)** |
| ***Stone Soup Story (see Youth Ministry book pp. 73-75).***Read the Parable of the Talents (Mt. 25:14-30)"*It will be as when a man who was going on a journey called in his servants and entrusted his possessions to them. To one he gave five talents; to another, two; to a third, one—to each according to his ability. Then he went away. Immediately the one who received five talents went and traded with them, and made another five. Likewise, the one who received two made another two. But the man who received one went off and dug a hole in the ground and buried his master’s money. After a long time the master of those servants came back and settled accounts with them. The one who had received five talents came forward bringing the additional five. He said, ‘Master, you gave me five talents. See, I have made five more.’ His master said to him, ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master’s joy.’ [Then] the one who had received two talents also came forward and said, ‘Master, you gave me two talents. See, I have made two more.’ His master said to him, ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master’s joy.’ Then the one who had received the one talent came forward and said, ‘Master, I knew you were a demanding person, harvesting where you did not plant and gathering where you did not scatter; so out of fear I went off and buried your talent in the ground. Here it is back.’ His master said to him in reply, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I did not plant and gather where I did not scatter? Should you not then have put my money in the bank so that I could have got it back with interest on my return? Now then! Take the talent from him and give it to the one with ten. For to everyone who has, more will be given and he will grow rich; but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And throw this useless servant into the darkness outside, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.’*" |
| **Outline** | **Prayer**:  | *Micah 6:6-8.* |
| **Presentation**:  | *PowerPoint.* |
| **Activity**:  | *Stone Soup* |
| **Table Discussion**:  | *Questions*. |
| **Post Discussion:** | *None* |
| **Closing Prayer**:  | *Group Prayer/Petitions.* |
| **Prayer** | **Introductory Prayer:** (**2 min,** after candle is lit…**)*****Micah 6:6-8****With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow before God most high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with myriad streams of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my crime, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? You have been told, O mortal, what is good, and what the LORD requires of you: Only to do justice and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God.* |
| **Pre-discussion Presentation** | Presentation (15 min) |
|  | See PowerPoint.  |
| **Activity / Table Talk** | Table Discussion (35 min) |
|  |  (see hand-outs) Lead the students to explore the best options for the common good in each scenario presented. Save the car discussion for last since it has a more personal application. |
| Post-Discussion Activity | ***None* (0 min).**  |
|  | None. |
| Closing | **Announcements and Prayer (5 min).**  |
|  | **Group Prayer**Intercessions The Beatitudes (Mt. 5: 3-11).“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you [falsely] because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven. Thus they persecuted the prophets who were before you." (Mt 5:3-12) |
| Reminder | **\*\*\*\* REMEMBER IMPORTANCE OF RECORDING ATTENDANCE!!** This is a legal document! Please, write down on your attendance sheet the name of any teen at your table, whether they are on your roll or not. |
| Attachments | **Below:*** “Common Good” Small Group Discussion Scenarios
 |

**“Common Good” Small Group Discussion Scenarios**

(There are 4 scenarios to discuss. Choose however many you have time for, but leave time for the car scenario. SAVE THE CAR SCENARIO FOR LAST!)

**Directions:** The following scenarios are based on real problems confronted by people living in poverty. Your group needs to come up with two solutions to the situations. One solution has to be based on “direct service.” How can you meet the immediate needs of individuals? The other solution needs to be “social change.” How can we help to correct the problem in the community in the long term?

**Poverty Scenario**

**Struggling Family Farms**

In the mid-West, the farm crisis has hit family farms especially hard. Large “agri-businesses” make it difficult for the smaller family farmers to earn enough to make a living. By producing more crops, large businesses can produce more for less money. Sometimes they can even dictate the prices that they will pay. On the other hand, small farmers often need to deal with crop brokers. They aren’t big enough to demand a price. Instead, they have to accept the price that the broker offers. Brokers tend to offer low prices because they know that the small farmers have to accept it. It’s too expensive for an independent family farmer to bring their own crops to market. As a result, many families have lost their farms. Others are struggling just to earn enough to keep the family business running.

What would you do to help address this situation?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Direct Service (Charity)** | **Social Change** |
|  |  |

**Poverty Scenario**

**Inadequate Job Skills**

*70% of the new jobs in San Francisco require computer skills. These new jobs tend to be higher paying positions – positions that include medical insurance and pay enough to cover the high cost of rental housing.*

*A significant number of immigrant Latinas in San Francisco fled their home countries without finishing elementary school. For many, the only jobs they can find are as housecleaners who earn below minimum wage.*

What would you do to help address this situation?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Direct Service (Charity)** | **Social Change** |
|  |  |

**Poverty Scenario**

**Farm Worker Child Care**

There are approximately two million migrant farm workers in the United States. Farm laborers work long hours and earn poor wages in dehumanizing conditions. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, they are among the poorest of the poor in the United States.

Child care is one of many challenges facing migrant farm worker families. During peak harvest times, both parents work in the fields for extended periods of time. Yet, the cost of child care is prohibitive. Children are often left by themselves or a young sibling is asked to care for their younger brothers and sisters.

What would you do to help address this situation?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Direct Service (Charity)** | **Social Change** |
|  |  |

 Car Scenario (Personal Application)

You are approaching your 16th birthday, and you have heard your parents talk about getting a car for you. Many of your friends have gotten or are getting a car soon. You know it will be a hardship for your family to purchase a car. You have heard that the smog levels in the area have increased tremendously due to fuel emissions. Considering the common good of all who would be affected by your having a car, brainstorm some options for having your transportation needs met. (Decide which option best balances the well-being of the environment with your well-being.)

*Teacher Background*

The goal is to choose an option that does the least harm to self, community, and the integrity of creation.

Possibilities that might be considered:

* *One might choose a very fuel-efficient car—even though it is not a popular as a light truck or SUV.*
* *One might choose a used car so that he is reusing natural resources rather than consuming them to make a new car.*
* *One might turn down the car and ask to use the money in some other way.*
* *Consider walking, taking the bus, or letting his parents take him.*
* *One might accept the car, but lobby for legislation that sets higher standards for fuel efficiency and emissions.*
* *One might accept the car and car pool with friends in order to cut down on gas consumption. Consider running errands for Mom and Dad on the way home!*

(Living Justice and Peace, St. Mary’s Press p. 277)

**The Seven Basic Themes of Catholic Social Teaching**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 2 | *Sr. Joan Hart, SSND, created this diagram as a way to help people understand the seven basic themes of Catholic Social Teaching. The accompanying article explains the link between each theme and each part of the house.**Sr. Joan* has been involved in justice and peace education for the past 30 years and served on the NCCB/USCC Task Force on Catholic Social Teaching and Catholic Education from 1996-98. |
| 1 | *The foundation of the house is our fundamental belief in the dignity of the human person. This is so important that we need to dwell on it. It's not just an idea that emerged in the 19th or 20th century. We can trace it all the way back to the Book of Genesis. We are made in the image and likeness of God. Vatican II said that the role of the Church in the modem world is to be the sign and safeguard of the dignity of the human person. So this is the linchpin--the reason why we have a social teaching. Everything flows from this.* |
| 2 | *I have a friend who has a priceless collection of antique china. You can't just put these pieces in a china closet. She had a custom cabinet designed to hold and display them. Then she had the house alarmed as a protection. The point is, when you have something precious, you have to design structures to protect it. The walls and roof of our house are human rights, which protect human dignity. Human rights are civil and political as well as economic, social, and cultural. They spell out what we're entitled to just by being human. In many countries, the Church is the lone voice speaking out for human rights. We do so because they affect human dignity.* |
| 3 | *In the family room of our house we are reminded that we are called to community and to active participation in society. We are not isolated individuals but we are linked to others in our family, workplace, neighborhood, and community. This is how we work out our salvation, not alone, but with and through others. We are not observers on the sidelines; we contribute to society according to our talents.* |
| 4 | *In society, we come in contact with the poor and recognize that we are called to have a preference for them. So, in our dining room, there are places reserved for the poor. They have a standing invitation to be there, together with us. Because they are voiceless and powerless, we are ready to stand up for them, to have a special love for them. Again, this is not something new. The prophets in the Old Testament told us that how we treat those on the margins--the widows, the orphans, and the aliens could judge the quality of our faith. Without concern for them, our faith is shallow, hollow.* |
| 5 | *There are rooms in our house where different forms of work go on. There's the kitchen where meals are prepared, the study where tax returns are worked on, the internet where the teens have learned to surf, etc. Our social teaching tells us that those workers have a dignity and certain rights precisely as workers, that work has a dignity. This teaching came as a response to the industrial revolution in the late 19th century when workers were exploited, mistreated, and discounted. The Church was there to say clearly that workers have the right to organize, the right to collective bargaining, the right to a just wage, and the right to a safe work environment.* |
| 6 | *But our house is not a self-contained universe; it has windows on the world. We are called to be in solidarity with the rest of the world. Pope John Paul II describes solidarity as a "firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say the good of all and of each individual because we are all really responsible for all." Now that statement could overwhelm us--being told that we are responsible for all, but it's understood that we can only do what one human being can do. The important thing is the orientation, the attitude, and the lens through which we look at the rest of the world. We can't pull down the shades of our windows on the world because, in fact, the whole world is our home.* |
| 7 | *Finally, the lawn in front of the house reminds us of our duty to care for God's creation. This goes far beyond recycling, but it can begin there. We have over-consumed and damaged much of our environment. We need to repair and care for the earth as stewards of creation.* |
| Reproduction of this article is permitted for personal and non-commercial use. Please acknowledge the author by name when reproducing. |

**The Church has outlined seven key themes of social teaching:**

(Each corresponds to the orange numbers above.)

1. **Life and Dignity of the Human Person**

This is the foundational principle of all Catholic social teaching: human life is sacred and because of that each person has inherent worth and dignity.

1. **Call to Family, Community and Participation**

Human beings are both sacred and social. We realize the fullness of who we are in relationship – with family, with community and with society. We are all called to contribute to the common good through our participation in personal and societal relationships.

1. **Rights and Responsibilities**

Fundamental human rights – the right to life and to those things required for human decency – must be protected in order to maintain human dignity and build healthy communities. In order for everyone to have these rights, everyone must also take on responsibilities for self and others.

1. **Option for the Poor and Vulnerable**

If we are going to live as followers of Jesus, the needs of the poor and the vulnerable come first.

1. **The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers**

Workers have basic rights which are to be protected: the right to productive work, to fair wages, to union participation, to private property, and to economic initiative.

1. **Solidarity**

We are one global human family. We are responsible for each other. When one suffers, all suffer. When one celebrates, all celebrate.

1. **Care for God’s Creation**

We are not just consumers of God’s creation; we are also caretakers. Caring for all that God created is our responsibility.